

i magazine

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NUMB

The whole world seems numb.
People
are struck so many times—
assault and battery.

Minds are bombed by injustice
and anesthetized
by chemicals.

How can survival be possible?
My friends are weary.
The air is laden with poisonous fumes that are exhausted
into hearts
choking life,
desensitizing every
nerve.
Starved psyches are slowly carved away
character whittled down,
or drowned out.
We don't hear
the death screams...

Personal dimensions,
fragmented through our imperfect
legacies
are compressed,
reduced,
flattened
and folded
into two-dimensional figures and put
away
unread
by even ourselves.

The numbness follows, for any Body in pain can endure only so long.

We also, just to survive.

The creativity slept; I feebly tried to rouse this hibernating facet of my personality.

before it had the strength to poke me in the awareness.

Throw out the lifeline,
before I become

S. Langley

THE KISS

I looked down upon the surface
And found
Little understanding
Calm
Serene
An opaque veil
Beneath which ran (I feared)
Strong currents whose would grow
Rising in intensity
Until it became a riptide that threatened to overwhelm
and consume me

She opened her mouth to speak, but hesitated, and up out of those pale, gray eyes rose silver points of light. Awash in the luminescence, I perceived that her thoughts were being radiated skyward, up through the ether. Bound out ward at the speed of light, they journeyed toward the infinite until they struck the mirrors, left by the astronauts on the surface of the moon. Reflected earthward, they covered the return distance in the same amount of time it took me to close the space between us.

Contact brought transformation
Caused not by ideas metamorphosed in the depths of
a tranquil sea
But
By communion
With a soul
That had bathed in the warm, tideless flow
of the solar wind.

Michael Nolan

AERIAL SNAGS

It was a still summer night. You know, the kind of night when the day's heat does not ebb and the night's air does not flow. The only noise in the house was the monotonous whirr of a fan that, although it tried, did not relieve the oppressive heaviness of the room.

I was curled up in a chair, my clothes clinging to me and my hair sticking to my forehead. I was trying to read the newest best seller but my anger at the heat interrupted my concentration. Suddenly, I heard an "Eeeeeek." Perhaps it's a bird outside, I explained to myself as I returned to my novel. "Eeeeeek." again, only this time louder. It seemed to be coming from the fireplace. "You shouldn't read "Stephen King" at night," I scolded myself, "It puts your imagination in overdrive." But the noise came again. It was definitely coming from the fireplace. I put my book down and cautiously crept closer. "Eeeeeek." It's a bird in the chimney. But what is a bird doing in the chimney? Suddenly, I remembered the damper. Is it closed or open? If it's open, whatever it is can come in. I can see the damper handle. It is forward. Does that mean it is open? Damn the heat! My mind won't focus. Forward, yeah, it's closed. No, forward is open. I'm sure of it.... I think. "Eeeeeek" the noise came again. I grab the handle of the damper, hesitate, then push it back. It clanked.

I was about to return to my book when I heard "Eeeeeek", and a fluttering noise. Oh, I thrust my hand back into the fireplace in a panicked attempt to re-close the damper I had just opened, when all of a sudden a fluttering, screeching creature flew at me. As it rushed my head, it became entangled in my hair. Frozen in fear, I felt the creature struggle, pulling a few strands of hair out by their roots as it freed itself.

Terror filled my senses and my body declined my commands, but gradually my heart slowed and lucidity returned. I forced myself to face the creature. My eyes focused on what looked like a tiny anorexic rat with black eyes, sharp ears and a disgustingly gruesome mouth. Every angle of its body, including its leathery wings, was harsh, piercing and unforgiving.

"It's a Bat! It's a Bat! It's a Bat!" I heard myself screaming as I hit the floor and covered my head. I peeked out from under my arms to watch the bat as it flew, or rather, swam through the air, its little legs pushing against an invisible current. In its panic, it bumped lightly into walls. Once, it bumped hard enough to knock itself down, but got up to resume its terrified flight.

"Defense," I thought irrationally, as I telepathically searched the house for a weapon. I suddenly knew what I was going to do. I rose up on my knees and with a little more confidence, to my feet. The bat noticed my actions and swooshed my way. I covered my face and ran across the room and up the stairs, screaming all the way. There, at the top of the stairs I saw my salvation. Harry's double barrel shotgun. I grabbed it off the rack and ransacked the bureau drawer for the shells. I could hear the bat screeching below me as I loaded the shells into the chambers. Power and determination filled me as I held that loaded gun. Throwing some extra shells into my pocket, I took a deep breath and crept back down the stairs.

The bat, having exhausted itself, had landed on my curtains, its sharp claws digging into my percale, I aimed the shotgun and pulled the trigger. Boom! the gun kicked. My curtains hung in shreds and the window was blown out. The bat flew away. I aimed again, my anger and heat driving me on in a fit of insanity. I chased the bat around the room with the sight of my shotgun. Boom! a massive hole appeared in the wall. I reloaded and continued my paranoid pursuit. Sweat poured down my face as my anger rose. I reloaded over and over again. That bat was destroying my house. Mercifully, it found one of the windows I had blown out and escaped to the night and freedom.

I sat down, totally spent, and slowly scanned the war zone. Every window gone, every wall gnawed. The mantle over the fireplace split and the stones pitted and cracked. The ceiling and floors ruined. My beautiful furniture also had not been spared, its fabric torn and its stuffing strewn. There was a hole in one wall where I could see out to the streetlight, and I swear, I saw my bat there, scooping up insects.

I heard Harry come in. He stood silent for a long moment, his eyes silently absorbing. He turned to me and inquisitioned, "What the hell has happened here?" I timidly laid down the shotgun and replied, "We had a bat."

"How do you say I miss you to an answering machine?"

Paul Westerberg

All night she cried. She hated it when he would just hang up the phone; she hated not knowing where he was, what he was doing. He got so emotional. Yelling, breaking things. He never laid a hand on her though. She knew it wasn't in him. He was the nicest man she ever met. Kind and gentle. To her and everyone he met. Everyone could see it too. Especially her mother, especially their son.

He was a country boy at heart. You could see it in his walk, the way he looked people straight in the eye. It was like he was searching for someone he knew. A long lost friend, out of sight but not out of mind. Not too many people looked you in the eye in that city.

They had met two years ago. He had traveled across the country to study at the local university. He was living in her parents' house. Her parents rented a room upstairs to students for a little extra income. His first morning there she waltzed into his room expecting to find him up and out of the house. He was fast asleep. She gazed at him, she saw that he was breathing hard from smoking. Her parents didn't allow smoking in the house, so he was out on the porch most of the evening, sipping beer with her father, enjoying endless conversation and a cool spring sea breeze. He brushed the hair from his eyes, staring at the sea and the cars rushing past on the highway. Amazed at the continuous flow, he laughed, telling them about the view from his front porch. "Nothing but trees," he said, awkwardly reaching for another beer, effortlessly lighting another cigarette. She fell in love.

So did he. And before they had the strength to speak the word, she was pregnant. What was to be a summer to remember for the both of them became a summer they would never forget.

That was two years ago. A lifetime to them. Things had changed between them. They tried to like each other with the same passion they had when they made love. Helpless it was, they knew it all too well. She pressured him to marry, only because her mother pressured her. He was homesick with a passion. He talked in his sleep, drunk, of the rolling hills and evergreens covered with snow

of his home, lost but not forgotten. The only thing that kept them together was their son, now able to speak their names.

He came home, 2 a. m. She looked out their bedroom window at him sleeping in the back seat of his old car, dreaming of the eastern sky with true love on his mind. She knew tomorrow when he woke, heavy headed, and came into the house, they would talk. They would let go.

He left that day. Never to return. Two years later on their son's birthday, a card arrived in the mail. Written on the inside corner was a poem.

Your morning hair,
your autumn eyes,
are all that I see,
see of you.
When I'm thinking,
I'm always thinking of you.

When my back is turned,
when I can't see a thing,
I hear the sounds,
The sounds of your shoes,
a little boy's laugh,
That make me turn.
But you're not there.
I miss you.
I love you.

Daddy

David M. Harty

ROUTE 2

I could hear the machines digging through the hillside from right here. They had a couple of bulldozers, and a steam shovel that looked like it belonged in the Cretaceous. We'd go over on weekends and play in the pipes that were being laid for drainage. Army, mostly. I remember it being dark in those pipes, and when you were about halfway through, the dampness would curl around your body like dead fingers, and you knew the openings were about to be blocked up, and you'd spend eternity locked in the darkness.

We thought it was wonderful. All that noise and mud, the trucks carrying off debris, the men running around in bright, yellow hats. One afternoon they had to blast through a granite ridge, and in anticipation of that event my entire body vibrated to such a degree, I almost levitated clear off the ground.

My brother and I and the two boys from next-door got the idea that we could be engineers. We set to work like Romans, and in no time had an interlocking system of highways running all over the place. We were like an amateur Army Corps of Engineers: damming the runoff from rainstorms, creating reservoirs, and generally constructing any fool thing we could think of. The end came when we dismantled part of a stone wall (probably about 150 years old) in order to build a dam behind which would be a body of water that would swallow Lake Mead. Our calculations had not taken into consideration a natural obstacle that dwarfed the Rockies, and made the Isthmus of Panama look like a ditch you might dig around your garden.

I can still see my mother standing there. Hair with just a hint of red, and freckles covering arms and legs and face. Long and lean and looking like some kind of Celtic warrior queen about to let out a war cry that would make the souls of her enemies long for the deaths of the bodies they inhabited, just so they could put some distance between themselves and this dangerous entity. There was an aura emanating from her head and shoulders that looked like sheets of heat rising off the Mojave on the hottest day of the century. All construction was immediately halted, and we spent the next two

days putting things back where they belonged.

As I said, it all happened right here. You can see where the wall was dismantled; some of the stones were put back with the weathered side facing down. The white-picket fence is new, and it stands on the site of roads that cut through the jungles of Borneo, or the trackless wastes of the Sahara.

One summer evening not long ago, I watched as my mother used a hammer to repair a picket that had come loose. She drove the nail home and started walking toward me. The hint of red in the hair was gone, but the freckles remained, and there were events that had transpired, or words that were said, that produced a faint glimmering, an angry nimbus that warned me I was about to be straightened out.

As she strode across the backyard, I heard the trucks and cars zooming up the highway, and thought of the war games in those pipes. I felt as far removed in time from them as Aeschylus was from the siege of Troy. I knew the ground my mother crossed was pulverized granite locked in a matrix of erosional debris, but that Golden Age seemed so long ago I could just as well be in the valley of the Euphrates, sitting on a tell made of mud-brick from silt laid down by the flood of Noah. The hammer my mother carried would not be made of the hickory and iron her grandfather fashioned it from, but of bronze. Figures depicting various aspects of the moon goddess of Ur would curve gracefully around the handle.

My mother reached me and I withdrew slowly from my reverie, carefully re-entering the real world. I put my arm around her as she sat beside me, and I realized I am now older than she was when the terra-forming of our backyard was stopped by one soul-withering look. Swiftly, like the water that pours through a ruptured dam, I became immersed in a sea of comprehension. Birth, death, and all the events that occur in between are but motes of dust. They waft forever through an atmosphere where shafts of light randomly illuminate them as they drift slowly in and out of the electromagnetic flow.

I lift my gaze from the stonewall that no longer holds back malarial waters, turn my head, and my eyes meet my mother's. At that moment, the last cicada of the day lets loose his song. The sound

is of metal being stretched, being pulled apart, of something being shaped just below the threshold at which my mind can conceive. As the sound dissipates, the echo lingers. Faintly, like the sound of far-off thunder on a hot, summer day when you can feel the static in the air, I hear the sound of steam shovels and trucks. But mostly I can hear her voice calling to my brother and I across the open yard. We stop what we are doing and run toward home. We run across the roads that have since been washed away by rain and snow, across the wall that once held back the reservoir, and across the golden fields of love, memory, and imagination.

Michael Nolan

FISHING AGAIN

You wanna go fishing again. I don't really like fishing, but you seem to get so much out of it. We drove along the beach to the pier—saltwater eating away at the underneath of the Mustang. Our friends think it's a big deal that we live on Daytona Beach, 'cause you can drive on it. I always think of the time you parked the car in the soft sand and we had to have help pushing it out.

It costs a lot to fish off the pier and you never catch anything. It's worth it, though, just to watch you out there.

The smell of the salt water, the cold dampness of the wind, and that old guy selling the fishing stuff makes the atmosphere perfect.

I stay inside, half listening to the old guy talk about the weather, the fishing and "young kids in love." I like to listen to the seagulls and the loudness of the ocean underneath me. I like to watch how the wind messes up your hair and fills up your jean coat. You don't seem to notice.

I pull the arms of the sweater I'm wearing down over my cold hands. It's your sweater. I always wear it when we go fishing. It's old and falling apart. The white in it has a dinginess to it that won't wash out. The sweater is obviously way too big for me, but it fits perfectly.

You never smile. You struggle constantly to keep from smiling. I can see your lips twitching and every now and then a hint of a smile escapes. You can't control the brightness in your eyes, though, or the way you lightly walk around the pier searching for a better spot to cast off from.

I used to want to be out there—sharing in this part of your life. But I found out that I can learn so much more just watching you from a distance. Everybody needs some space—sometimes it's good just to watch.

Donna Gebo

MIKE AND I

Mike and I were sitting on the hood of the Mustang looking out over the water. We used to go there a lot, mostly 'cause we had nothing else to do. We lived in this dumpy little apartment in "Vacationland"—Daytona Beach, Florida. We had a lot of junky furniture, more cockroaches than we knew what to do with and all our neighbors were strange. We had minimum wage jobs, a lousy radio and no T.V. We were happy.

Anyway, we'd park at the edge of the laundromat parking lot and just sit there watching all the boats pass through the Causeway, and we'd talk long into the night.

One night it was really late and the laundry was closed. All the lights were out around us except for the bridge and the traffic lights of the cars and a few boats. The white paint of our car glowed and I stared at it until my eyes got blurry. Mike told me to look up. A barge was going through. It was the first either of us had ever seen.

Barges don't look so hot during daylight, but at night there isn't anything more beautiful. It was really long and moved so slowly. Really quite a change considering everything else in Daytona was always so fast—so rushed. The barge was all lit up with what seemed like a thousand tiny lights.

Everyone and everything stopped. It seemed like a really long time before the barge had completely passed through the opened bridge. Not long enough. Never long enough. Everything just started up again—moved on. So did we.

Donna Gebo

EDUCATION: CAN A STEALTH BOMBER FIX IT?

Against the sliver new moon, it was a bombardier's delight, as Karyn Windfall, an unemployed single parent and born-again student, stood at the open bombay door of a B-2 Stealth bomber. She was preparing to bail out.

Karyn was dressed in a screaming-Geronimo-orange jump suit. Her hands, wet and tense, gripped the inner steel ridges of the invisible, new-world-order bomber. Karyn watched the target approaching. Her eyes watered as she strained to look through the ominous clouds that were soaked by the nation's ink wells burning furiously from the war on education.

"The campus looks like an angry WASPS shed," Karyn said, contemplating the drop zone. "Crazy millionaires putting fire to the wealth of the nation, the library. Oh God, are they mad at me? I hope I'm made from the right stuff!"

Karyn was too high to see any of the collateral damage. Although the ground war was still brewing among the Academic Budget Custodians, otherwise the poor ABC's, and the Millionaires For Affordable Choices far, far, below, Karyn was restraining herself well. After all, she was a winner.

She remembered to put on the crash helmet, snapping the chin strap and adjusting the goggles. Karyn thought, I won the Lottery For A Free Education, and not every day a divorced state worker has a chance to attend a public millionaire college like The Mount.

Education needed a friend. The apostle of higher learning was the pilot, Commander in Chief, George Bush. He was the guardian of all the ABC's throughout the land. But his great love was Stealth Bombers. It was a marriage made in heaven.

One day Commander Bush entered a classroom bunker and a fleeing ABC with big eyes, who did not recognize the flyer, misspelled his name. The Commander patted the ABC on the head and reassured the little scribbler that he was a forgiving Bomber. Since then, Bush has had his finger on the button for education.

Bombing the ABC's had become the profitable choice. The

Academic Budget Custodians were taking a beating in the halls of higher education. Millionaires were remodeling the polo grounds next to the swimming pool. By the way, knowledge is power. Pay as you go, the choice of the rich, was written on the urine stalls in the men's room.

Karyn was waiting to jump-start her education. Any second now, the pilot, Commander Bush, would switch on the green light and she would step out, into space like a freebird, freefalling into the history books of tomorrow. The great mother of all Windfalls was born to fly.

The Stealth bomber veered slightly, adjusted by high tech brain power instruments. The silent black hand of God was eight miles in the stratosphere, soaring underneath the celestial vaults of heaven's gate. Karyn's heart was pressed into her throat. "I feel a bit nervous," Karyn belched into her helmet mike to the pilot.

"We are going to bomb the ABC's back into the stone age." Commander Bush wallowed over the rhino stick. He was an ancient ace avenger with nineteen hundred and forty four sorties.

"Isn't that a little harsh?" Karyn asked him, trying to remain calm. "ABC's are weapons of mass destruction."

"But, Mr. Pilot, Sir, the ABC's were merely celebrating the new world order," Karyn said, as she was fixing the chute's harness.

"Pilot to Bombardier," Commander Bush said. "What's the dope?"

"Looks like we're over the moon by the size of those craters," Bombardier Weld said. "Hey Skipper, this shortsighted Lamar Alexander bomb sight is terrific."

"Chalk one up for the old Gipper," Commander Bush said. "He wasn't sleeping all the time."

Now, the battle for the ABC's really exploded into a budgetary of chaotic pamper flag waving with the Lottery For A Free Education. It was a creative entrepreneur's way to legalize loan-sharking.

Bombardier Bill Weld, who dropped that smart bomb, was murdering freedom spellers by the bucket. Higher tuitions and increased fees had the ABC's on their knees with a knife at the throat. It was business as usual, a Saturday night special right to the temple. Millionaires For Affordable Choices had broken the heart of the

nation.

"When I retire," Commander Bush said, "I want to be remembered as the Stealth Bomber of Education."

"Stay your course, Skipper," Bombardier Weld said. "We're near the drop zone, zero minus 600 billion."

"I just hope the chute opens," Karyn said. "I don't want to die, smacking into a campus that didn't want me in the first place."

"Don't worry about the chute, honey," Bush said. "Worry about hitting your target. The campus."

"I can't see a thing."

"Yeah," Bush said. "Smart bombs couldn't find it either."

"Don't take me wrong. I'm honored to be selected. But I'm so nervous."

"Read my lips, babe, and hit the silk," Commander Bush yelled into Karyn's helmet as the red light flashed to green. And she was out the door.

Karyn Windfall was free falling at a million dollars a second. The cost of a public millionaire's college was out of sight. The Stealth bombers at \$200 billion a whack were the only means in balancing the delicate policies of education. Free choice of elimination had become the motto of the rich.

The ABC's fought a desert storm in the parking lots at The Mount. Millionaires, who fought bitterly to park their Mercedes 500 SLs in color-coded lots, were furious. The desert storm had spread onto the golf course. Monogram golf clubs were weapons of choice. Big deal.

Zooming head on, like a crippled duck at astronomical speed, Karyn raced toward the pin-lighted campus, gritting her teeth into the wind, saying, "Mercy, mercy, mercy me. I don't like this idea," before she remembered to count one thousand and one, one thousand and two.

Karyn was flat out, flapping like a flaming flamingo, when she pondered the inexcusable. You know, she thought, maybe you won't like it in a public millionaire's college. Look at the cost of books at the Brink's Book Store.

Paperbacks were costing an average of \$23,000 to God knows what. Wooden pencils were the big items, \$6,000 an hour. "Oh my God, I've forgotten the count," she stammered.

"One thousand and twelve," Karyn was guessing, when she pulled the rip cord, jerking the enormous weight upward from her boots. Swinging like a baby in a broken cradle, Karyn rocked abruptly into existence. The pressure finally subsided from her body. What the hell, Karyn thought, a hostile campus can't be any worse than dive bombing from a Stealth bomber.

Karyn was gliding from under the opened pink chute, swaying comfortably and working the strings. Somewhere over the vicinity of a dog's leg, around the 18th hole, Karyn felt she was off course, but had a birdie.

"Thank God," were her first words arriving in the Garden of Eden. But a sentry answered her prayers, "Who goes there?"

"It's me, God, Karyn Windfall," she said. "You know me. I won the Lottery."

"You got a permit in quadruplicates, lady?" The sentry demanded. He was David Kearns, an ex-executive from Xerox. "I'm the night sentry in charge of this dump."

Karyn, who was wrapped in the pink bureaucratic chute and tangled with a thousand endless cords, was stunned. "But I won the Lottery. I hit the target. Isn't there any justice down here?"

"You will have to come with me, lady," David Kearns said. "And clean up that mess."

"Am I going to the registrar's office?"

"No," Kearns said. "The caddy shack."

Joseph C. MelAnson

To P___

This gloaming's wind is sweet bewilderment.
It's undertones are nostalgic—

a lone bird wailing, the rush of branches
that sweep amid the darkling stars

and glitter back from waxy green masses
a sallow glinting of the moon.

I think it was on such a night as this
you and I first lay together,

stung to desire by one another's eyes
to cheat life's ceaseless ennui.

Somewhere a bell touched off sombre echoes
which unsettle me even now,

as then when I heard them in the distance
and you frailly swallowed my soul

from off my lip, where it was lingering,
yearning to mingle with your own.

Our skin bristled in the frosty linen,
brushed by a tumbling air; and then

sudden thunder sputtered and deeply boomed,
and vividly for one instant

your round face floated before me, poignant
and wide-eyed as an animal's,

till it was dark again, the faint blue light
washed away in the drumming rain.

Perhaps it was mere lust, yet I wonder:
is passion ever wholly crude?

I shouldn't think so, nor for that should you.
Never take a windfall to task.

Joseph J. Brazauskas

MY FATHER'S GIFT

"Look what I found," my father's gruff voice boomed from behind me.

Startled, I jumped in my seat. My father rarely came into my room and I couldn't imagine what had brought him here now. I looked up from my homework to see his outstretched arm, tanned and muscular, a brown lump cupped in his hand.

"Caught him behind the shed." Grinning, he stretched his hand out further so I could see.

I stood and leaned uneasily forward, peering at the mysterious object. A baby rabbit, dwarfed by the size of my father's hand, sat hunched in a ball.

"You want him?"

I continued to stare in amazement at the small creature.

"Take him."

Gingerly, I reached to take the rabbit, my fingers brushing the rough calloused skin of my father's hand. The rabbit's back feet flailed wildly in the air as I lifted it.

"Hold him tight!"

With both hands, I held the rabbit close to my chest, stroking the soft brown fur. Its deep eyes bulged and seemingly oversized ears were held flat along its back.

"Do you want to keep it?" my father asked, growing impatient.

"O.K."

I could feel its heart pounding.

"I'll get a box to put him in."

I stood, gently stroking the rabbit until my father returned.

"We'll put newspaper in the box for now. Tomorrow, I'll get some shavings from the wood shop."

Carefully, I placed the rabbit in the box. It hopped into one corner and pressed itself against the side as though wanting to disappear into the brown, corrugated paper.

My father stood watching for a moment, then turned and left the room without a word. I could still smell his minty after-shave mixed with cigarette smoke. Crouching down, I patted the rabbit.

It cowered even more into the corner.

From the kitchen, my mother called, "Supper's ready." Eager to spill the news, I took my seat at the table. I looked to my father for encouragement, but his head was bent over his plate, noisily gulping down the stew my mother had made. I couldn't stand the excitement any longer.

"Daddy gave me a baby bunny."

My three sisters stopped arguing over whose turn it was to set the table and looked at me in disbelief.

"Where is it?" they chorused.

"In a box in my room," I answered, sounding very pleased with myself.

All at once, they jumped up and scrambled for my room. I scrambled to get ahead of them but my older sister, Alison, stuck out her arm and got to the door first.

"Where?" she demanded, bursting into the room.

"In the corner," I said, scooting around her to get to the box. The rabbit had begun to shake from all the commotion.

"He's so-o-o cute!" my youngest sister, Erin, squealed.

"Be quiet! You're scaring him," I scolded.

"How do you know it's a boy?" my older sister, Holly, asked.

I hesitated. "Because he looks like a boy. His name is ...Timmy," I decided all at once.

"Can I hold him?" Erin begged.

"No, he's too scared."

Erin frowned.

"You can't keep him," Alison declared.

"Daddy said I could have him!"

By now, my mother had entered the room and was leaning over the box. "What are you going to feed it?" she asked.

I hesitated again.

We can buy him some lettuce and carrots, can't we?"

"And what about when he's too big for the box?"

"I can let him hop around my room." My mother's indifferent expression never changed.

"You should let him go," Alison declared again. "He's supposed to be a wild animal. Besides, he'll pee on your rug and make it smell."

"That's gross," Holly chimed in.

"Well, it's time for supper," my mother said. "Let's leave the bunny alone."

"You should let him go," Alison repeated, her final parting shot. Holly nodded in agreement. My mother took hold of Erin's arm and led her from the room. I patted the rabbit again and went to supper.

* * * * *

Over the next few days and weeks, the rabbit grew little by little. At first, I fed him bits of food from the refrigerator. As his appetite grew and my mother complained, I brought him handfuls of grass instead. The rabbit was grateful for whatever I gave him, his little nose crinkling up as he chewed. I didn't have an answer when my mother asked what I would feed him in the winter.

Everyday, I dumped out the box behind the shed and refilled it with fresh shavings. Each time the rabbit tipped over his water dish, I mopped up the puddle as I scolded him. I never would have guessed that such a small animal could be so much trouble.

Whenever I could, I let the rabbit out of his box to hop around my room. He made the most of his freedom, often jumping in the air and scurrying around as though from an imaginary enemy. He chewed through the rawhide laces of my moccasins and always hopped under the farthest corner of my bed when it was time to go back in the box.

And, each day when he returned home from work, my father would stick his head in my bedroom and ask how the rabbit was doing.

"Good." I would say. Then my father would be gone.

One time, I started to tell him that I had named the rabbit Timmy. Suddenly, the name seemed too silly to say out loud and I stopped myself just in time.

A day didn't go by without some snide comment from my sisters about the "poor" rabbit. By then, they had enlisted their friends in defense of their position that I should let the rabbit go. They spoke loudly of their disapproval and gave me menacing looks on the school bus. After school visitors were advised not to go near my room because "it stank." Even Erin lost interest after our cat had kittens.

"Do you think I should let Timmy go?" I asked my mother one day, after my sisters had gone outside.

"It's up to you." she said.

I went back to my room and sat on the edge of my bed. If I let the rabbit go, I thought, everyone would be happy.

After a while, I got up and went over to the box. I carefully lifted the bunny, tucked him inside my sweater, and went outside.

* * * * *

Back in my room, I changed out of my school clothes and sat on my bed to put on my moccasins. I heard water running in the bathroom next door and realized my father was home from work. Frozen, I listened as he splashed water on his face and washed his hands. I heard the bathroom door open and his footsteps coming down the hall. My heart was pounding when he pushed open my bedroom door.

"How's the little rascal?"

I could feel my face burning. "I let him go." I said, barely whispering.

"What?"

"I let him go." I snapped, my words bouncing back at me.

"What'd you do that for?" he blurted out.

I swallowed hard. "Mum said to."

"You didn't have to..." Shaking his head, he turned and left the room. He never finished the sentence.

I pulled one moccasin out from under my bed and slipped it over my foot. As I tugged the laces tight, one snapped leaving a bit of chewed rawhide in my hand. I laid back on my bed and let the tears come.

Susan Greenough

Just on the border of your waking mind
There lies another time where darkness and light are one.
And as you tread the halls of sanity,
You feel so glad to be
Unable to go beyond.
I have a message from another time.
-Electric Light Orchestra "TIME"

He awoke to a strange sound. He looked around his room. It was twilight outside. Of course, it was always twilight outside. He had his window programmed for it. He climbed out of his hammock to investigate the noise.

"Light." he said. Instantly, the room was bathed in a soft, mint glow. His room was sparse, as was most lower income dwellings. Two rooms: one for sleeping, the other for the limited entertainment center provided to everyone. He looked at the digital read-out: 19:04. Almost time to go to work anyway. Then the noise came again from the other room. Trudging out of his sleeping room, the light shifting rooms with him, he was amazed to find an animal in his light chair. At least, it looked like an animal. It was small, grey, and fuzzy. He walked over to it and, again, it made that peculiar noise.

"What are you?" he asked it. It didn't answer. Maybe it didn't hear him. "What are you? What is your name?" Again, it didn't answer. He sat in front of his light chair and pondered. His computer would know what it was, but how to get it over to the Ident Pad? He touched it. It made the noise again, but this time it rubbed against his hand. Strange, he thought. It actually likes to be touched. He picked it up. It was soft and light. Holding it away from him like it was diseased (and most likely it was, he thought), he carried it over to the Ident Pad.

"Identify."

"A small, grey mammal known as a feline. This particular feline is in the growth stage. It is six months old. It is also of the type known as Persian. Warning: Felines have been known to carry disease."

"Computer, why does it make noise?"

"Felines make various noises according to what they want. Hunger, pain, and cold are the baser elements that will evoke a

certain noise. The feline in question is hungry."

"What does it eat? And can you simulate it?"

"Felines eat a variety of substances." The computer spit out a printout while it said the items. "I can simulate two of the items: milk and ground-up meat byproduct also known in the late twentieth century as cat food."

"Do so."

A red light went on above the food dispenser. He opened the door and just stared at the concoctions in the trays. Whatever it was, it smelled terrible! He took the trays and put them in front of the feline. "What's its name?" he added as an afterthought.

"Felines, back in the late 19th century, let humans name them. Such names as befitted them according to their color, activity, etc. In explanation: Blackie, Spaz, Fluffy, Mittens, Lazy, and so on."

"So it wants me to name it???" he asked, looking at the feline with awe.

"Felines, also known in slang as cats, have never been proven to use their vocal cords to emit human speech. Therefore, I am unable to answer that question. It is, however, a logical assumption."

"What should I call it, then?"

"I don't know."

He looked at the cat. It was grey, soft, and fuzzy. "I'm going to call it fuzzy." The cat had cleaned the plate of that disgusting substance called "cat food" and now was working on the milk. "Computer, can you teach it to talk?"

"Feline vocal cords have never proven to have emitted human speech. It could be possible. However, it will take 2.4 years."

He thought about that. "Start when I'm at work. Alternate program: find out how it got here.

"Alternate program running...alternate program finished. Printout will follow."

"What?"

"Repeat: Alternate program running...alternate program finished. Printout will follow."

"That was fast! Well, let's have it."

The computer printed out the data and he took it, perusing

the paper.

"I take it that a 'rip in the space-time continuum creating a warp' is bad. How did it get here, in my dwelling?"

"Unknown."

"Where is it?"

"On the floor, twenty centimeters in front of the light chair."

He went over to the light chair, looking for the rip."

He made a snorting sound. "That's ridiculous. I couldn't possibly fit into that tiny line!!" He touched the rip and was gone. The rip was also gone.

"Warning has not been heeded. First program will commence. Your name is Fuzzy. Say Fuzzy..."

Kelci Strait

INSIDE MARLEY'S MACHINE

turning it out. edit, rewrite, edit further. stress. quit . rewrite.
capture the essence. become the slave. it is master. until it's
said, you pander to it's whims. expect no mercy. it appears as an
unbreakable lock. pick at it with a bobby pin, or put seven sticks of
dynamite under it.

the right strategy brings the truth out like a river of gold. anything else
is

Pandora's box. fetid critters scurrying about in your brain. it begins
to flow,

but like bald tires on ice, you spin madly over one damned word.
thesaurus=traction. rolling again. SCREEEECH ! writer's block.
madness and helplessness. maybe hopelessness. a tall glass of
Seagram's. a smoke. swear at the dog. a nugget appears. back to
it. one hand at the keyboard. the other caressing drink and smoke.
tik tik tik tik. the telling of an old injury. a tear shows up from nowhere.
wipe. tik tik tik tik. end. reread. edit. it stinks. it hurt. it's over. could
be better.

forget it.

yeah, i sure do like to write....

jeff kramer

SOMETIMES RIDING ALONE IS BETTER

The music was turned down suddenly. I was quite surprised. I wondered what was next. His words meant nothing to me. To break the silence I said, "Look at all those orange trees."

It was one of the wildest fields I have ever seen. Green trees with bright orange circles hanging from them made the landscape look colorful compared to the dry, sandy desert. Looking at Andy, I decided that I was glad I said it first.

"They're apricot trees," Andy said in his know-it-all fashion. Now I thought. I've already been two thousand miles with this boring idiot, and he has the nerve to say that these trees in California just happen to be apricot trees. We're at least a fourth of a mile away from these trees first of all, and secondly, I've never even seen a stupid apricot tree. I couldn't believe that he even came up with the outrageous idea that they were apricot trees.

"Andy, how the hell can you tell that they are apricot trees?" I yelled. Sitting in the car with this kid was more work than anything.

"No, they're apricot trees," he said again. WOW! I just looked the other way. I turned up the music for a little relief. Then I glanced back at him. He was still looking at his glorious field of apricots. I had thoughts of using his head for some type of bullseye, but I just sighed and turned the music back down.

"THEY—ARE—ORANGE—TREES—, ORANGE! Do you hear me?" I screamed satisfyingly.

"NOOOPE, they're apricot alright," he said in his fancy fashion.

God, I should have dropped him off somewhere in Texas, I thought. It's a stupid tree! It is a goddamn stupid tree! Why is he arguing about this? I've seen an orange tree before! It doesn't take a brain to figure out that when you see a tree with bright orange circles on them, that for some strange reason, stop me if I'm crazy, that they could be oranges!

Then I actually saw the light at the end of the tunnel! Out of the corner of my eye, I looked at Andy. Tractor hat,

pencil in mouth, some of the biggest ears you'll ever see, a discount store shirt on, lovely emerald green sweatpants on, and out of fashion socks with the cute stripes. What a sad case this kid is, I thought and began to relax.

"I think they're orange trees, " Andy said in his know-it-all fashion.

Charles D. Salmond III

REFLECTION

Maria stumbled towards the shower, removing her clothes as she went. The tepid water slowly began to dissipate the alcohol-induced fog that hung around her brain like a shroud.

The bottle of bourbon had been sitting on the shelf when Maria returned from the funeral. She had not drunk to the memory of the mother she had once loved and had learned to hate.

Shivering from the cooling water, Maria stepped out of the shower, her body covered with tiny goose bumps.

Standing naked with her towel in hand, she caught sight of her reflection in the full-length mirror on the back of the door.

Not bad, she thought, for a forty-year-old virgin; full white breasts, gently marbled with tiny blue lines, still sitting high over a stomach, not flat, but nicely rounded. The legs, showing the years of waiting on an old woman who was never satisfied, were marked with blue veins that stood out slightly. Gazing at the reflection of her plump, rounded fanny, she became embarrassed at the color rising in her face.

Maria quickly turned from the mirror, wrapping herself in the towel, and headed into her bedroom.

Maria, wearing the new black dress with white polka dots, placed the suitcase into the trunk of the old Ford. Pausing for just a moment to look at the old bungalow, she slid behind the wheel.

Turning the key until the engine sparked to life, she pulled the wheel over and onto the road towards the highway, not looking back.

Patrick E. Killay

DULCE ET DECORUM EST

Upon hearing the words of Owen's Dulce et Decorum Est, read by Patrick W. Vinneri, I for the first time in my life could feel the immensely distorting pain that the war had brought to my own grandpa who had fought in it and the jolting impact it must have had on him. It was the war that had altered his life forever, leaving him virtually breathless. Owen's words spoken aloud made me glimpse at what it was that grandpa must have endured, and what it was that had hardened him so. Hardened him into a man, mean with anger and abuse.

Still young and innocent with the sweet breath of new life, I would ask, "Why can't grandpa work very long in the garden?" as I watched him stumbling out of breath again, wheezing as in a sweat, coughing up mucous and taking a nearby bench to rest. My mom would call out an answer though no meaning came to me, "Because he has gas in his lungs from the war." For the rest of us the gardening continued, and he would rise to join us again when he felt able. Watching, I assumed "This is the way grandpas are."

His condition had caused my poor grandma to work a full time job outside the home. She was paid twenty-five cents an hour while raising six children and half a man.

The reading of Owen's poem plucked an incredible chord deep inside of me, which enlarged my understanding of the war, and how it had entered into the life of my family. To see and feel and hear the corrupt pain and agony that was experienced. Listening to the poem, I could almost smell the burning flesh that cried out to be saved. I lived, for moments, the horrifying nightmare that my grandpa and so many others were never allowed to wake up from.

Now I understand the weight behind the hand that came down so hard against my mother as a child. The embracing pain that was carried home from the war had met her in its rage. Standing before the tempest, she tried to protect her mother with love. She trembled

in fear, as the anger of his pain fell upon her with the weight of a war— a war that was too heavy for an army of men, and it never stopped killing their dreams, their sense of self, killing all hopes of happiness.

The men of war began to die inside. Those with gas-filled lungs were told they were lucky to have made it home at all. And for those who did not, flags were hung to wave in the breeze as symbols of freedom. Medals and plaques were presented respectfully for the courage spent. While widows dressed in black mourned their empty rooms, others were faithfully awaiting their loved ones return.

The years move on, yet the sight of a man still gasping for breath, still staggering from the war seems ceaseless. Hell lived on, encircling his life. Until his dying day, each wheezing breath struggled forth, short, with a frustrating grasp on life itself. And yet, he and his comrades beheld the gift of glory! Well, to Hell with the damned glory, 'cause to Hell is the only place it took them. Yes, it was the glorified war that colored the picture of my grandpa for me in shades of decaying sadness, and it's mostly through this haze of sadness that I remember my grandpa's eyes of blue, somewhat peaceful in the end.

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" Latin: "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country."

Dona O'Dou

Dulce et Decorum Est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through the sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue, deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

GAS! GAS! Quick boys!-An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling, from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,-
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Wilfred Owen

TRELLIS

After the papers were passed, I went back to the old house on Robbins Road in Watertown for the last time, searching for any overlooked items, checking things out. After wandering through all the empty rooms, I wound up locking the back door, and stopping out on the patio by the place where the picnic table used to be. I gazed at the broken-down old trellis with the skeleton of the rose bush that the cold October wind was whipping around. What a magnificent show it put on every June, back in the old days. A whole wall of huge Paul Scarlet roses, the background of many a photo at a cook out, graduation or birthday party, after-wedding bash. All the good times.

My mind drifted back to that summer day nearly thirty years ago...O Lord! Was it that long ago? Yes. My dad was building the trellis for me. I had bought six Paul Scarlet Rose bushes, and he offered to make the trellis, telling me that since I wanted to cover one whole wall, he could save me money by making it himself. So he got the wood and cut it into strips, and was weaving them together and nailing them to the roof. I thought, "How meticulously he works." But, oh, dear, poor Dad. When had he gotten so old? His hair had become wispy, and the gold had turned to silver. His posture was stooped and his jowls drooped tiredly. My God, what time does to all of us. When I was a kid, he looked to me like a kind of Superman, a tall, strong, blonde Clark Gable kind of superman, complete with moustache, dimples, and cleft chin. I idolized him. He always knew how to do everything. He could make anything, draw like a regular artist, play the guitar, and sing like Bing Crosby. What a guy!... Now, here he is, this old, retired handyman, puttering around, filling up his empty hours. My mom, who still worked, had asked me to find jobs around my house to "Keep him out of mischief," ... code for "Keep him out of the Schnappes." He did like his little nips. I found many ways to keep Dad busy and I was glad to be able to help my parents in any way. Of course, my kids loved "Papa." He was their pal.

The years went by so quickly. The house was filled with noise and bustle. Those were the growing up years, the school days,

noise and bustle. Those were the growing up years, the school days, the graduations. Then there were the four years that Dave and Den were in the Air Force. Then the weddings, the family growing with the births of the grandkids. All those summers out there by the rose bush. They were the good times. My Dad would play the guitar and we'd all sing along. My husband, John, would tend to the barbecue grille, and the little ones were splashing in the Porta-Pool. And then, of course, as in all families, came the sad times. We lost my dad and, two years later, my mom.

Then, in 1981, John died. It was not one of those long drawn out agonies, that sometimes happens. We found out it was lung cancer in December, and he went into the Stillman Infirmary just before Christmas. He died on January 21st.

Through the worst of it all, how could I have held up if it weren't for my kids? Dennis took over and saw to every detail, walking me through choosing the casket, the flowers, the wake, the funeral. He and Dave took care of the insurance details. After everything calmed down, they all rallied around, taking care of me, seeing that I was kept busy, giving me every kind of support with their love and strength. Chris and Val both invited me to share their homes with them. But I finally convinced them that I'd rather stay in the old homestead. In time, I came to realize that I could make it on my own. It's a challenge but I find, to my own surprise, that I am a survivor. After a year I decided to sell the house and get a small apartment.

The chilling wind rattles the ramshackle trellis, bringing my attention back to the present. I stare at the rotting wood hanging loose, still standing only because the strong thick vines have held it up.

I got the car, and looked for a long time, a long, last time at the past. I backed the car out of the driveway and drove up Route 2.

Doris Noonan

TRELLIS

Slender white strips of wood were seen
To form a sturdy woven frame
That held up tender shoots of green
'Til their promised scarlet beauty came.

The strength of the vines, time tested;
The rosy blooms displayed their charms;
And in the end, the tired trellis rested,
In the vines' supporting arms.

Doris Noonan 1990

RAIN AND TEARS

It's cold outside, and I sit here
on the steps in the rain because the
sun is crying again. So am I.

You asked me to come to you— I
would run to you. You would want to
kiss— we'd make love instead. Ask me
to dream about you— I'd never wake.
I tried to shine the light on our love.
I gave too much.

Now these tears dribble down on me
with the rain, covering the warm light
my heart once gave—
Like the sun.

Jeff Sewell

YADAH

(Heb. : knowledge gained by intimate experience)

Do you hear a song in the darkness?
A song of reconciliation
Heralding a Celestial Sovereign's
Friendship.

Clusters of galaxies fly from his fingers,
precisely oriented in their paths.
In one, our blue jewel spins
where confusion shrouds men's minds
and war rages on.

On my journey, my lifelong trek,
the song sings: Yadah.

Amidst the battle for men's hearts
A small child sings her songs to God
a feeble attempt for her
Yadah.

Through the darkness
Across the dimensions,
the only Universal Truth
Guides this child of Adam
Away
from his sad legacy.

On my journey, this lifelong trek,
He entreats us still,
Yadah.
To know.

S. Langley

what is going on life is never as good as what i'd like to think i can make up but what i make up these days is never as good as the lives other people made up what is it all about all those pages i have read and all those lives i have pondered all the endless hours i spent reading christy brown at midnight in the living room while my family was safely tucked away in their separate compartments i have a stronger sense of family when they're all asleep the daylight hours of our household are usually troubled and none share my interests my passion to read again and again the wonderful pages i have read and will read again the dog-eared pages of so many paperbacks i have read i have begun to live those lives as my own is so much less interesting fiction is so much more interesting than non-fiction although everyone insists that is not so the stories i have read are so fantastic when stacked up against real life that again and again i retreat to the well worn pages of john irving a man who has taught me all i care to know about love a man who has spoiled all relationships for me on the page and under the sun nothing is so perfect as the lives he leads my own is so much less than perfect so again i read i am a voyeur night after day peering over the pages of someone else's fictitious life i am the watcher all the while wishing it was me on the page my words between the covers for now it's not so i sit quietly in my chair a chair which is used for watching television by the rest of my so called family the chair which i sit in this night this hour reading the pages someone else wrote about me.

christopher woods

Maria Morgan
 Edward V. Danielson
 Janice Sankela
 Linda Gold
 Cathryn Bailey
 Charles
 John Lane '91
 Mike Basco
 Joseph D. Bragawson
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